

DRAFT MTC Guiding Principles for Sustainable Transportation

Background

There is growing recognition that the resources upon which most powered transportation has been based for the past hundred years are not inexhaustible. One of the paramount objectives of the MTC is “planning for the next generation.” Many MTC activities advance sustainable transportation. These include the smart growth policies of the 2005 Long Range Plan, the Transportation for Livable Communities program, the incorporation of global warming and greenhouse gas reduction as key policy drivers, as well as TOD, routine accommodation, and other MTC policies.

Sustainably Focused Investment

The following principles are intended to help focus and guide decision-making to elevate consideration of the degree to which a given infrastructure investment is sustainable, based on the following draft definition of sustainable transportation:

“Sustainable transportation refers to transportation systems or modes that:

- Meet or exceed minimum safety standards;
- Ensure equity of access and mobility;
- Minimize local environmental impacts;
- Are global climate neutral;
- Are compatible with a thriving local and global economy;
- Do not depend on finite fuel supplies;
- Do not depend on energy generation systems that consume more usable energy than they produce.”

1) Sustainability

In all transportation decision-making - for infrastructure investments, planning, and financing -substantial eligibility or ranking consideration must be given to the degree to which a given transportation system can continue to function indefinitely as measured by the resources, fuels, and energy sources upon which the system is dependent;

2) Public Access

All people are entitled to reasonable and efficient access to other people, places, goods and services;

3) Social Equity

Transportation decision-makers must strive to ensure social, interregional and inter-generational equity, meeting the basic transportation-related needs of all people including the non-drivers, seniors, disabled, women, children, poor, rural, and urban community members;

4) Public Health and Safety

Transportation systems are to be designed and operated in a way that protects the health (physical, mental), social well-being and safety of all people, and enhances the quality of life in communities;

5) Individual Responsibility

All individuals have a responsibility to act as stewards of the natural environment, undertaking to make sustainable choices with regard to personal movement and consumption; individuals should be educated about and understand the complex transportation system and support establishing appropriate transportation regulations which could be conflict of interest for some individuals in the short run but which will benefit the most users of the system over the long run;

6) Integrated Planning

Transportation decision makers have a responsibility to pursue more integrated approaches to planning and all planning will strive to be multimodal and conform to these principles;

7) Transportation System Education

Transportation decision makers have a responsibility to create public education programs through high school, college and public media (such as TV and radio) programs (which are much more effective than workshops) to develop public understanding of MTC goals and how practically to support those goals;

8) Pollution Prevention & Existing Pollution Reduction

Transportation needs must be met without generating emissions that threaten public health, global climate, biological diversity or the integrity and balance of essential ecological processes; existing levels of unacceptable emissions must be reduced to healthful levels;

9) Land and Resource Use

Prior to any expansion of the environmental footprint of a transportation system, efforts to maximize efficiency in existing infrastructure are to be undertaken. This is an economically and environmentally beneficial approach. Transportation systems must make the most efficient use possible of land and other natural resources while ensuring the preservation of vital habitats, farmland and other requirements for maintaining biodiversity;

10) Full Cost Accounting

Transportation decision makers must move as expeditiously as possible toward fuller cost accounting, reflecting the true social, economic and environmental costs, in order to ensure users pay an equitable share of costs by:

- Counting “embedded energy,” i.e., energy spent in the production of a given fuel or energy generation system
- Develop a long-term vision of a desirable transportation future that is sustainable for environment and health and provides the benefits of mobility and access

AGENDA ITEM 6

- Assess long-term transportation trends, considering all aspects of transportation, their health and environmental impacts, and the economic and social implications of continuing with 'business as usual'
- Define health and environmental quality objectives based on health and environmental criteria, standards, and sustainability requirements
- Set quantified, sector-specific targets derived from the environmental and health quality objectives, and set target dates and milestones
- Assess the social and economic implications of the transportation vision, and ensure consistency with social and economic sustainability
- Build broad support and co-operation for implementing sustainable transportation systems; involve concerned parties, ensure their active support and commitment, and enable broad public participation; make continuous effort to raise public awareness and provide public media and education programs, including high school and college programs; develop public understanding and cooperation that are indispensable for the success of new technology development and implementation which is often blocked by institutional issues
- Work toward the enactment of legislation and regulations pursuant to the aforementioned, when and where necessary.